1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

121 the allocation of members in a genealogy to a socially and culturally recognized kin
60 group. This may include the same persons as a genealogical group, or it may in-
61 clude only part of them.

(c) Affinal relations—the links between individuals which are based upon marriage through the socially recognized union of a husband and wife.

601 The Kanuri separate genealogical relations from those of descent just as we
602 do by speaking of distant relations. They have a special word for such people, although many younger people today do not use it, and simply describe such people as "distant" or "far away" in the same way that Kano is far away from Maiduguri. The traditional word refers to a vine that grows around a household wall and then continues to reach out and grow on the walls of adjoining households. However the vines all stem from one root, just as an expanded genealogical tree can be viewed as coming from one man and his wife or wives. These distant kin do not attend one another's family ceremonies or send gifts on important occasions. Indeed their whereabouts are often not very well known to the person speaking of them. Many Kanuri can give quite a large number of such kin especially in their parents' generation, their own, and that of their children. On the other hand, like Americans, they find it difficult to remember relatives back beyond their grandparents even though there is a special kinship term for great-grandparents, and only a few people can name the brothers and sisters of their grandparents. Exceptions to this occur in increasing degree as families become more and more aristocratic. Such families retain the memory of important male ancestors in their genealogy much further back than do ordinary people, indeed they often maintain special persons to keep the memory alive.

601 Set into the genealogy of any Kanuri individual is his own descent group.
611 In anthropological jargon—used because once understood, it is technically efficient —this group is reckoned cognatically with an agnatic emphasis. That is to say, Kanuri descent groups are based upon an individual's relation to persons through both his father and mother (cognatic relationships); and a person feels equally related to all of his four grandparents. However there is an emphasis placed upon those related to a person through males only (agnatic or patrilineal descent) for a number of important activities. The father's cognatic descent group is called the family of the blood, and the mother's cognatic group is the family of the milk, while the word "family" (*dur*) refers to both father's and mother's side of the family. Other evidence for the cognatic quality can be seen in the words used for various relatives in the descent group. There are no distinctions between mother's side and father's side in the terms for great-grandparent and grandparent, and although there are significant differences in the terms used to refer to relatives of the parent's generation level, cousins on both mother's and father's sides can be lumped under one term, which is the same as the one used to refer to a brother or a sister. On the other hand, there are differences between the mother's and the father's side which we refer to as an agnatic emphasis.

611 This emphasis can be easily seen in inheritance and when a man goes to
671 court. The Kanuri follow Islamic inheritance law in which men receive two por-
428 tions to every one given to a woman. Thus it is twice as important to be related to
562 your father as your mother, if everything else is equal, such as the amount of wealth
578 to be inherited and so on. These rules of inheritance are followed very closely in

These rules of inheritance are followed very closely in practice, because everyone knows that any dispute over inheritance that cannot be settled amicably between the surviving relatives goes to court—and the court normally takes ten percent of the estate for its adjudication services in an inheritance dispute. When a man is called into the courts, and most Kanuri have been to court at some time in their lives, he must go with his agnates—his father, paternal grandfather, father's brothers, sons, father's brother's sons, and any other male he can muster who is related to him in the male line. This agnatically related group is legally responsible as a whole for the acts of each of its members unless a crime against the state has been committed. A Kanuri who is threatened immediately thinks of this group as the one that he can turn to for help. As we shall see later the group often lives close together so that the agnates are neighbors as well as a corporate group in the eyes of the law. They help one another in many day-to-day activities, perform ceremonies together, and often practice the same or closely related occupations.

Although there is an emphasis on a person's agnates, his kin relations through his mother are also quite important. People who have no matrilateral kin (those related to a person through the mother), or very few of them, are considered to be unfortunate because they lack that much warmth and affection in their lives. These kin, say the Kanuri, love you like a mother loves her child. You can feel at home with them in a way that is less conflict-ridden than any other kinship relation. People often said that if they had to borrow money it was better to go to mother's kin first before asking anyone related to them agnatically. There is always some tension over property among an agnatic descent group because it is the major one for purposes of inheritance, family wealth, and privileges. People say that if a man borrows from his father or his father's brothers, or his brothers, or his patrilateral cousin, he is trying to get his inheritance or that of his brothers before the proper time. Furthermore, the responsibility in court, and in the eyes of public opinion, of one agnate for another also increases the tensions in this group as compared to the matrilateral one. By contrast, however, a man with no agnates is not just unfortunate—he is a social outcast. He has no group to stand up for him as a result of his birth into society; he has no legal right to a father's inheritance, he is thought of as an outcast, he must rely solely on his wits, and he cannot easily be trusted.

A village area chief and his advisers declared that I should not hire a certain man and claimed that they were going to see to it that I certainly did not take him into my household. They told me that no one in the vicinity knew his brothers or his father, or his father's brothers, or indeed if he had any, or where they might be, and he would not volunteer any information on the subject. In their eyes he was not a responsible person, and if he did anything wrong there was no group they could call into account for it. Unless he could attach himself to a household, he simply had no means of achieving an accepted position in the community, and the village leaders did not like the idea of making me, a European stranger, responsible for this unknown man.[1] Obviously under such circumstances illegitimate

[1] This would mean that as his household head I must appear in court if and when he did something wrong. The local leaders did not believe they could require this responsibility from me, and were thus faced with the problem of allowing into their community a man for whom no one could vouch, yet giving him a paid place in one of its wealthiest households.

632 366 368 Two other foci of the Kanuri town are the market-place and the central mosque. The market-place is of course the center for all local trade, and on the particular market day of a town, activities center in the market, which is alive with people. On Friday, the central mosque, where people gather to pray, becomes the communal center. Throughout the week the compound of the Ajia (the Ajari), should the town be the administrative center of a district, is the focus of bureaucratic activity. In addition, activity centers around other public buildings: the court, the school, the dispensary, the public reading room, etc.

369 632 463 The three foci of the Kanuri town indicated above, the Ajari, the market-place, and the mosque, are of themselves strong arguments for the urban nature of the Kanuri town. Each is typically the center of an urban activity and urban occupations. The Ajia has, under him, a range of bureaucratic specialists: the Alkali, the Chief Scribe, the Treasurer, the Department of Police, the school-teachers and dispenser. The mosque is representative of the various religious specialists: the Imam, and the many malams of the town. The market-place typifies commercial activity, which more than anything else is characteristic of urban life, with its various specialists in trade and in crafts.

E. Social Organization

611 171 182 Unlike the majority of African societies, the Kanuri do not have unilineal descent. As Meyer Fortes notes, "The more

611 171 182 centralized the political system the greater the tendency seems to be for the corporate strength of descent groups to be reduced or for such corporate groups to be non-existent."[1] This is particularly apt in describing the Kanuri. Fortes states that the Nupe, the Zulu and the Hausa exemplify this. Culturally, the Kanuri share a good deal with both the Nupe and the Hausa, who are also Sudanic state-societies influenced by Islam, and this similarity extends to their social organization as well. In fact, the Kanuri represent the most extreme development of these features, for whereas among both the Nupe and the Hausa patrilineal lineages and sibs are reported the Kanuri are clearly bilateral in descent, and do not have corporate kin groups at all.

599 595 The most important social unit determined by kinship is the nuclear or the polygamous family. Consequently, this section will be concerned with a discussion of marriage, residence, the family and the household. Other aspects of social organization which are not based on kinship, such as the class structure, will be discussed separately.

1. Marriage.

586 587 It may seem curious to begin a section on marriage with a statement about divorce; nevertheless it is important to note at the start that the Kanuri divorce frequently, commonly, and

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1. Meyer Fortes. "The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups," American Anthropologist, 55, No. 1 (1953), p. 26.

602 younger brother (kərəmi) of the child's father, a relative be-
627 longing to the child's dur bube, will avenge the child's death, and under those circumstances the law will not punish the avenger. The kərəmi of the child's mother will do nothing, for should he avenge the death of his sister's child the law states that he himself may be punished. This seems to be the only case for stating that the dur bube is stronger than the dur chembe.

174 a-all It is extremely difficult to reconstruct earlier Kanuri social organization, and to estimate the changes which it has gone through. It is evident, however, that patrilineal descent groups were present at the time of the accounts of Barth and Nachtigal, both of whom spent long periods of time with the Ka-
174 nuri in the nineteenth century. For earlier periods of the history of Borno, names are given for tribes, and, in the history of federation, conquest and civil strife, these names sometimes have an ethnic or linguistic character; at other times they seem to designate political entities; and again they also resemble clans at times.

192 563 The Kanuri have a word, jili, which means "kind" or "sort", but can be used specifically for "nation," "people," or "kin
[607] group." A person's jili would first be given as Kanuri; he would then indicate sub-groups of Kanuri--Kanuri proper, Buduwai,
563 Mobber, Manga, Kwoyam etc. These sub-groups today speak dialects
184 of Kanuri which are all mutually intelligible, and no other in-
174 [187] digenous languages. They represent ethnic sub-groups who now share in the same larger culture, but who may have entered Borno

Chapter IV [p.50]

Kinship and Interpersonal Relations

This chapter describes the forms of behaviour which pattern the relationships of people in their day to day lives in Burma. The model for these patterns is the norm of behaviour governing kinship relations. It should be noted that this is not a theoretical statement but an empirical one which the evidence of this chapter, and those to follow, attempts to bear out.

(1)

Kinship Terminology

In the Burmese language kinship is referred to as tha. This is a general term that includes ego's father's and mother's consanguineal relations. The system is bilateral in the sense that ego recognizes his descent from, and relation to, two descent systems reckoned through the father and mother of his own father and mother. Thus, ego has his Pa-Mo and Mo-Pa as members of his consanguineal kin group. Dur hube (kin of the blood) refers to father's relatives, and dur chaube (kin of the milk) is the term for mother's relatives. The terminology is generational in the sense that all generation levels can be distinguished and classificatory in the sense that one or two terms serve to delineate all of ego's relations at any one generation level, except the first ascendant. At the first ascendant generation parent terms are extended to parents' siblings with suffixes added to delineate junior and senior and there are separate terms for Mo-Sha and Pa-Sha.

Affinal relations are divided into two categories. The first term, [illegible] [mother in-laws] refers to ego's spouse's relatives

(1) See the appendix to this chapter for kinship diagrams and a table of kinship terminology.